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An Ancient People and Their Problems

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An Ancient People and their Problems.

Once upon a time a journalist voyaged to a far island country over the peaceful Pacific for thirty days and nights. Gayly he boasted that he knew nothing of the country, but averred that he knew as much as the average person of today. Into the land he went and gathered superficial data—snapped up the extreme and curious, passed by unnoticed the real and everyday. Then he came back from his voyage overseas and wrote so that those who knew little of the land might read and wonder, while those who knew more might read and—smile.

Four hundred years before him, Magellan, of primary-geography fame, stopped off on a round-the-world tour to take a peep at the same island and to mend his boats. Becoming interested in the aspirations of one great chieftain, he led his own men into battle in the chieftain's behalf and placed the favorite in power. But, killed in battle, he lies buried on Mactan, a small island of the Visayan group of the Philippine Islands. And we, whose lives have barely touched those of the people of the Philippines—people whose problems were of sufficient importance to command Magellan's attention three hundred years ago, centuries before our own country had problems of note—are supposed to think lightly of our ignorance of those distant people of an ancient origin.

THE FILIPINOS' EARLY BEGINNING

Nearly a hundred years before our permanent English settlements were made in America, Spain was colonizing the Philippines. And Spain had a lively time doing it, for the people whom she undertook to conquer were themselves conquerors. They had come up in prehistoric times from Southern Asia and had driven the aborigines into the mountains. They had established a feudal suzerainty under warlike chieftains and were carrying on commerce with the people of China and the far north when the Spaniards appeared off their coasts. This prehistoric conquest took place long before Magellan started out to see the world.

And a century before Sir Walter Raleigh came to Virginia Legaspi, a Spanish grandee, attempted to pick maynila blossoms on the coast of Luzon. The maynila is a most fragrant, waxy-white blossom that hides in a glossy, dark-green shrub. Mothers in the Philippines are wont to sit in their doorways at twilight while the fireflies flit about the softly rustling foliage and tell their drowsy tots of the valor of the mighty Tagal chieftain, the great Apo, who assembled his braves behind the maynila hedge and gave battle to the proud Spanish invaders while the womenfolk and children hid in the tall grass.

They tell the tale of the haughty Spanish warriors spitting fire and lava at the falling braves till they, knowing too well the

inexhaustible force of their own powerful volcano, Taal, gave way before these Spanish hand volcanoes, laid down their bows and arrows, gave up their maynila hedge, signed the blood compact and were baptized.

But the women of the tribe, so the legend goes, the wise old grandmother, knowing that might is not right and that good is all-powerful, met in solemn conclave in the tall grass and contrived with rites and ceremonies, long forgotten, to bewitch the fiery Spanish grandes. They charmed them and shut them up in the gnarled old dap-dap trees within the maynila hedge. And



The 300-Year-Old Church of
San Augustine



One of the Dap-Dap Trees of
Legendary Days

there they are today, if you but search them out. And there they will remain, prisoners throughout the span of justice.

So long as right has power, just so long will might be shut up in the knotty, twisted, writhing dap-dap trees which each spring throw out imploringly their blood-red, fingerlike blossoms to a calm, blue, unresponsive sky. And serious little tots at play whisper that bloody might is trying to get loose. This is a bit of witchcraft lore that far antedates our own Salem series that so sorely vexed poor, bewildered Cotton Mather. It is a legacy of true worth to the childhood of the Philippines that dates back to

the fifteenth century, a legend of the power of good over evil, of right over might.

CHRISTIAN FILIPINOS AND THE MOROS

With the Spanish conquest of the islands went the Christian absorption of their people. The first conqueror carried with him the first priest. The ideals of the Filipino people were Christian ideals. They believe in the supremacy of good. They believe in one great, omnipotent spirit who, according to the folk tales, had in the dim distant past doomed Loku, a defiant chieftain, to haunt the evening shadows in the form of a lizard and at twilight to call out mournfully in vain search of his lost grandeur. To this day he can be heard in the coconut groves at dusk calling hopelessly, "Loku, Loku," a warning, the little children tell you, that you should obey your parents and not defy God. On these ideals Christianity flourished. Within a century the islands were Christian—with an exception.

While Christian missionaries labored among the people of the northern islands, followers of Mohammed wielded their scimitars throughout Mindanao and the Sulu Islands. Those who escaped the scimitar fell heir to the Mohammedan faith. The Christians of the island have for centuries been harassed by the Moros. Up to within a short time before the American occupation of the island, Moros would suddenly sweep down in their gaudy canoes, lay siege to a peaceful Christian village, burn the houses and carry the women and children off into captivity. These Moro Filipinos, however, form only a small part of the population of the islands, less than one-fifth of a million, while there are ten million Christian Filipinos. Further, the Moros are rapidly waking up to the realization of a lack, and are applying themselves to the task of mastering a bit of Christian culture and learning.

Not long ago an account appeared picturing an army officer in the Philippines being drawn across the Agno River in a rope ferry. A photograph, made in the act, graphically illustrated this unusual mode of travel. The officer, gun in hand, sat in a huge basket suspended high in the air from a cable, and was being drawn slowly across the river. Had I not lived for four years on the banks of the Agno, and crossed it twice daily on an old Spanish bridge, I, too, would have gathered the impression that this river in particular and the archipelago in general are places of unique modes of travel, where bridges are all but unheard of.

A mountainous island country, swept by tropical rains, naturally has short, swift rivers with innumerable estuaries, and it would necessarily follow that it would be a land of bridges of some character. Bridge building was an art in the country before the Spaniards went to the islands. With their ever-ready bamboo, men fashioned bridges by driving stakes into the bed of the stream so that each pair would form an acute angle far above the running

water. On these for supports they tied bamboos for a footpath and a single bamboo for a handrail. Such bridges are now to be seen away out in the bosque.

Once on a hike for orchids, we came upon one connecting a rice field with the owner's home. They are bits of primitive ingenuity in the way of engineering, and as picturesque and fantastic subjects for copy as one might wish to find. But they are the exception. The islands abound in bridges, bridges of all kinds, commonplace and extraordinary. Under Spanish rule the Filipinos built Spanish bridges all over the archipelago.

AMERICAN BRIDGES BUILT BY FILIPINOS

Under American supervision, and now under their own—for Filipino architects have recognized ability—bridges of American



One of the Many Modern Bridges in the Islands

construction are built. No province but can boast of its hundreds of bridges, moss-covered bridges, suspension bridges swaying with their loads, steel bridges brought from overseas, and clear-cut, concrete bridges of the American type. Every way one turns there are bridges to cross, so commonplace that they are noticeable only because of a picturesque setting now and again as one whirls past in a car over the well-kept roads. Still, our journalist published the picture of a rope ferry. What impression did it convey? Did it cause one to realize the fact that there is easy communication between all important points in the island? Did it call up the real picture of the motor routes connecting Manila with Baguio, the summer capital some two hundred miles distant?

And so it is with the other impressions created about the people of the islands; they are either carelessly or maliciously mis-

represented. There are some savages there. There may be said to be savages in America, also, if we take into consideration some of our least progressive Indian tribes. But there are ten million civilized people in the Philippines and less than half a million semi-civilized and savage. America is familiar with the savage element, perhaps more so than with its own Indians. The civilized Filipino life is so like our own that it does not make very catchy copy.

In Washington there now lives the family of Jaime de Veyra, resident commissioner of the Philippine Islands. Mr. de Veyra,



Resident Commissioner Jaime de Veyra, Who Represents the
Philippines in Congress

together with Mr. Yangco, represents the island in Congress. They have a voice on the floor of the House, but no vote. Mr. de Veyra has risen to prominence as men do in American life. He is a man of the people, a one hundred per cent Filipino from the Visayan provinces. During American occupation he has been successively governor of his province, member of the Philippine Congress, cabinet member, executive secretary of the islands and resident commissioner to America. He is one among thousands of

Filipino men of clear mental vision who are able to come to their own conclusions and to act on them.

AN AVERAGE FILIPINO WOMAN.

In Mr. de Veyra's family there are four bright children who, having attended American schools in Manila, slipped right into their places in the schools of Washington. Even the baby of the family speaks three languages—her native tongue, Spanish and English. To American women, whose ideas of Filipinos have



The De Veyra Children, Who Came Straight From the American Schools in Manila Into Their Grades in the Schools in Washington

been founded on vivid description of Igorrotes and other wild tribes, Mrs de Veyra's gentle manner and evident culture have been a revelation. She is sought by women's clubs because of her charming manner as an impromptu speaker on the subjects nearest her heart—the women of her country. One afternoon I heard her talk before the College Women's Club of Washington, D. C. She gave in perfect English a concise account of the work of a woman's club in Manila which supplies milk to the babies of the

poor and trains mothers to care for their young children. She told of another woman's club which has branches all over the Philippine Islands, and which maintains day nurseries for the children of the working women; provides Christmas cheer for the lepers, the insane and the convicts; and gathers data to influence legislation for the benefit of women and children in the islands.

After her talk was over a New York woman voiced no doubt the sentiment of more than one woman present when she remarked: "Why, I had no idea that Filipino women were refined, cultured or even educated."



Mrs. de Veyra, Who Has Been Awarded the Red Cross
Medal for War Work

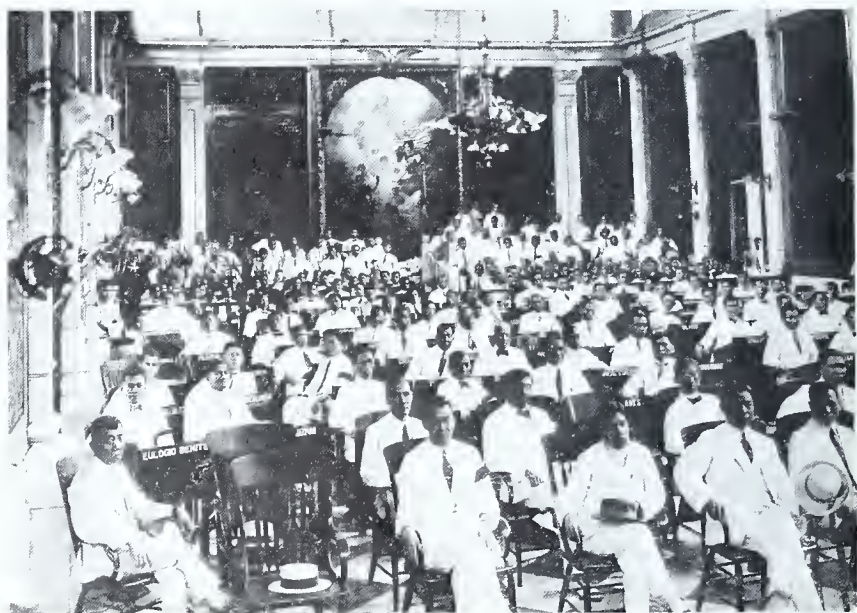
Do Americans as a rule realize this? Are they not, rather, too "fed up" on savage pictures and descriptions to be able to picture to themselves the real people of the islands, the ten million Christian Filipinos who make up the population of the little island country?

Some of course will say: "But she is a 'mestiza,' a woman of foreign extraction." Or else, "She has been educated abroad."

She is neither. She is an average Filipino girl of an average Filipino home, who has been educated as most girls are educated.

She is one of the thousands of Filipino mothers who are well equipped to fill their place in life either at home or abroad.

When the European war broke out she joined the Congressional Red Cross Unit as well as the Community Center Unit in the section of the city in which she lived. She has knitted an even thirty-six pairs of socks and ten sweaters for our army, besides giving two days each week to the making of hospital garments. Rather an everyday woman like ourselves, is she not, knitting and sewing and working to win the war? She was one of the few in the District of Columbia to be awarded the Red Cross medal for having done more than eight hundred hours' work, as well as to be given the certificate signed by the President in acknowledgment of articles made. She was also decorated for work in the Liberty Loan campaigns in Washington.



Joint Session of the Philippine Legislature

IGORROTES IN THE PHILIPPINE CONGRESS.

The good, substantial, everyday Filipinos predominate in the islands, no matter how gayly Chapdays and Quidnos may prance in their native nothingness across our journalistic pages. Chapday was a friend of mine, a grand old Igorrote of his day, which was passing with him. With his one hundred and twenty years of semicivilized experience, he clung to his old customs. He asked to be buried with the rites of his fathers. So he sat in smoky state in a grass temple high above the sacred smudge, which for thirty-two days embalmed him, while his kinsmen and clansmen consumed half the herds roaming his seven hills, lest his vast

wealth offend his jealous god and bar his entrance into bliss. They gathered from all the corners of his estate to pay him homage. Crouching, boiled beef in hand, they mumbled into the smudgy smoke words of endearment and praise. Weird, fantastic and odorful it was. Yet it bordered closely on the commonplace, for Chapday's grandson could not attend the funeral because he was attending school in America.



The Igorrote Queen

Chapday's day is passed. His tribe has boys and girls in all grades of the schools. Two will finish at the university this year. His descendants, with a western education engrafted on the sturdy honor and integrity of their ancestors, are new men ready to lead their people into a new prosperity. Two Igorrote representatives already hold seats in the Lower House of the Philippine Congress. One of the girls from Chapday's tribe was

chosen Igorrote queen of the Baguio Country Fair in 1916. An Igorrote queen of a Filipino Fair in Baguio, the summer capital—is there a parallel of an Indian queen of an American Fair in Washington? The mere episode of the young mountain queen's gay fair reign speaks louder than words of the Filipino's attitude toward the rapidly developing people in their midst.

Our ignorant voyager brought back to America the alarming cry that the Tagalogs living around Manila are a most powerful tribe which is able to sway the destinies of its less fortunate contemporaries, the Ilocanos, the Pangasinans and the Visayans. He declared that the Tagalog language is unintelligible to his neighbors to the north and south; in fact, that he could not get an idea across to his neighbors, even if he tried all day. This is an old, old cry among those who give the matter little thought. It began when people had not learned that they could not tell a Tagalog from a Visayan or an Ilocano.

President Taft, when Governor of the Philippines, found that they were undistinguishable. He wrote: "I cannot tell the difference between an Ilocano and a Tagalog or a Visayan. The Ilocanos, it would seem to me, have something of an admixture of the Japanese blood; the Tagalogs have rather more of the Chinese; and it seems to me that the Visayans have still more. But to me all Filipinos are alike."

Even the Filipinos themselves have to ask one another from what province they come, as we here must inquire a man's state or town. The citizenship of Manila, the capital of the islands, is made up of people from all provinces. Because the city is adjacent to Tagalog provinces, the impression seems to gain ground that the people are all Tagalogs. There is no more ground for such a belief than there would be for supposing that the people of Washington, D. C., are all Virginians.

ALL THE PROVINCES HAVE THEIR BIG MEN.

In reality it is not the Tagalogs who might hold a preponderance of power, if a preponderance could be held in a democratic country with a republican form of government. The Visayans are the "F. F. V.'s" of the islands; they have, since the beginning of American occupation, had the greatest number of men in positions of trust. One of the first commissioners to the United States was Mr. Luzuriaga, a Visayan; and Mr. Mapa, a Visayan, was one of the first justices of the Supreme Court of the islands. Three members of the present cabinet are Visayans, as is also one of the resident commissioners in the United States, Mr. de Veyra. The speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Osmena, the mightiest mind in the entire archipelago, is a Visayan.

But all the provinces have men in positions of trust, and men in public life of whom they are duly proud. The Bicol,

who for decades have pointed with pride to their high percentage of literacy, sending their boys and girls to Europe for higher education after they have grown out of childhood at the foot of their inspiring volcano, Mayon, are a deep-thinking, serious-minded people; they have their Jorge Barlin, the first Filipino bishop consecrated by the Pope at Rome. It was Father Barlin who made the invocation at the opening of the first Philippine Assembly in 1907—a little incident in world history the full significance of which one hardly grasps. In a setting of Oriental



Speaker Osmena of the Philippine Congress

fanaticism, where life is held at naught, where man has no right that he may not lose overnight, where his liberty, his home, his family are his only so long as they are not wanted by another more powerful than he, there had come into existence an island people with Christian ideals, in whose land our own America had laid the foundation of democracy. Here, in 1907, the Bicol bishop, Father Jorge Barlin, gave the opening invocation at the first Oriental assembly of the people, by the people and for the people.

The Zamballans, with their rugged mountains and shell-lined coasts, boast of their Theodore Yangco, capitalist and philanthropist, whose boats ply the palm-fringed bays of the archipelago, picking up tropical cargoes and tropical people, carrying them from port to port at Oriental rates which, though small compared with Occidental fares, have made Mr. Yangco one of the rich men of the world. His money he spends on his own people, matching the amount raised by a country district for its much needed school building, giving another district a library, putting up public buildings where they will best benefit the boys and girls of the Philippines. A lasting monument to his name is the Student Y. M. C. A. in Manila, put up and equipped through his generosity.

A SELF-MADE CAPITALIST.

The Hocanos can boast of a self-made capitalist, Mr. Singson, who with a small capital fitted up an office in Manila with



The Stately University Hall in Manila

a second-hand table and chairs and gasoline boxes for filing cases, and then went thoroughly into the Philippine oil industry. He now conducts a three-million-dollar business, besides being a director of the Philippine National Bank and president of the Insular Life Insurance Company as well as president of the Compañia Mercantil de Filipinas, and of a steamship line.

The Pangasinans have a professional man of note to their credit, Doctor Sison, professor of medicine and surgery in the Philippine University, and his wife, who is a specialist in obstetrics. Doctor and Mrs. Sison came to America not long ago for special research work at Johns Hopkins University. While here Doctor Sison was offered the professorship of tropical medi-

cine in the University of Pennsylvania, but he declined, preferring rather to serve his own people.

And the Tagalogs have their Aguinaldo, the plain farmer general, who in 1898 organized a republic and put it into operation. And so on with all the people in all the provinces. There are men who achieve results to be found everywhere.

A COLLEGE 25 YEARS OLDER THAN HARVARD.

As for the mistaken impression that men of the different provinces cannot understand one another, that the 'Tagalogs' language is unintelligible to the Ilocanos or Visayans, it is a matter of record that the Ilocanos have from the beginning of Filipino history depended on the provinces farther south for their food-



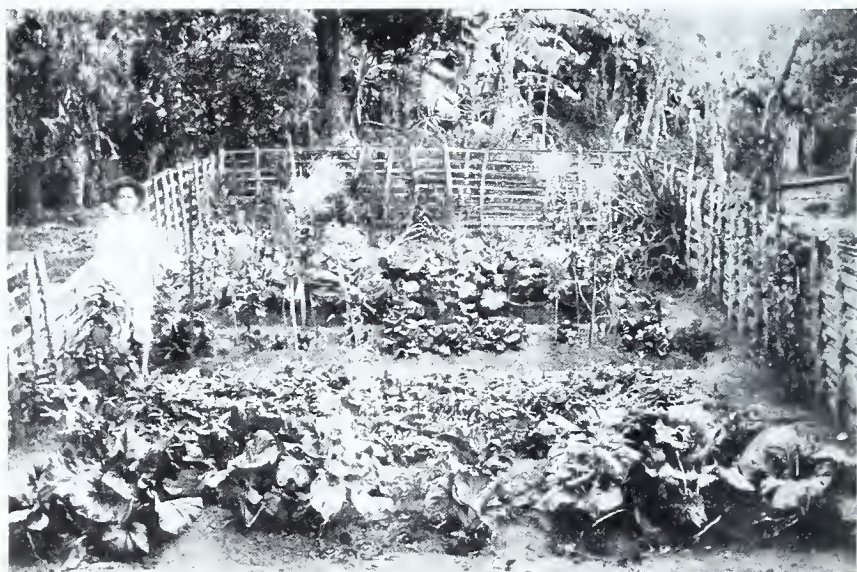
A Little Filipino Girl Starting Off for School

stuffs. They do not produce rice in sufficient quantities to sustain their people. So they depend upon their ingenuity as woodworkers, making chairs, beds and carved images to barter for food.

As far back as men can remember the great old Ilocano schooners have anchored in the harbors of Luzon with their highly prized cargoes of images, beds and chairs to trade for rice and salt. In 1903 we found them in the rice fields of the Pangasinans, helping harvest the cargoes for their return voyage to the north. They apparently made themselves understood then, as they do now. Schoolboys go to athletic meets all over the islands, and Filipino commercial representatives travel from one end of the archipelago to the other, and from results attained it is evident

that they get ideas across, regardless of the impressions of a hurried visit.

The fantastic council of the headhunters, which calls the braves from their sleep at dawn to race over the hills with the rising sun to a spreading mango tree on the highest peak of their domain, there to squat, solemnly smoking all day long while the sun slowly passes overhead and down the other side of their mountain world, throwing long shadows on the purple mists at their feet, thus calling them to leave their unfinished business under the tree and race away with the setting sun to their grass homes and sleep again, was ideal law-making for curious observation. Had our voyager chanced upon it in session, the public might have had a vivid pen picture to contemplate. But the opportunity lost, the little voyage of discovery a thing of the past, the public



A Philipino Boy and His Carefully Tended Garden

will suffer the prosaic description of a prosaic Congress, with senators and representatives from all provinces elected by the Filipino people whose franchise is limited by a literacy test.

The Filipinos are seventy per cent literate, a percentage of literacy higher than that of any country in South America, as well as higher than that of many countries of Europe. America has done much toward bringing up this percentage of literacy. We have occasion to be proud of the results of our venture. But there was a good foundation upon which to build when we went into the islands. The Spaniards had academies throughout the archipelago. They were no popular public schools, free to all as the system now is; yet Filipinos were being taught the rudiments as well as secondary and professional subjects. The old University of Santo Tomas in the Walled City of Manila is

twenty-five years older than our Harvard. Thus it is not strange that the great mass of the Filipino people are able to exercise the franchise.

Nor need it be thought strange that Malaysia, to the south of the Philippines, is drawing on the islands for teachers of English and industrial work; for the language and customs of the people of the East Indies are similar to those of the Filipinos, and Malaysia has waked up to the fact that the Filipino has standardized his basketry and other household industries. Malaysian schools are securing Filipino teachers to put their household industries on a commercial basis.

But this presents such a different picture from that of the voyager who was able in so short a time to gather together so many fantastic topics that he had no space left in which to tell of the commonplace things of Filipino life. Truly, men sometimes gather weird impressions. A certain other blind man did when he grasped an elephant's tail and told of the strange mammal—from his point of contact.

